WSDA

Washington State Department of Agriculture
News Release

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Media briefing

The value of Snake River dams to U.S. agriculture and the Western energy supply

OLYMPIA — The significance of barging to the nation's agricultural industry and the impact of dam breaching on the Western energy supply will be presented Tuesday morning (Aug. 14) at the Ice Harbor Dam Visitor's Center near Burbank in Walla Walla County.

WHO: Jim Jesernig, director of the state Department of Agriculture.

Glenn Vanselow, executive director, Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, Vancouver.

WHAT: If barging on the Columbia and Snake rivers were halted, it would take 120,000 additional rail cars, or more than 700,000 semi trucks every year, to carry the cargo now being moved through the transportation system to Pacific ports. Ice Harbor Dam, with a generating capacity of 603 megawatts, is one of four lower Snake River dams operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Combined, the four dams have an average generating output of more than 1,200 megawatts, enough to supply a city the size of Seattle.

WHEN: 10:30 a.m. Aug.14

WHERE: Ice Harbor Visitor's Center is located 5.5 miles east of Burbank, Washington, on Highway 124, 2.5 miles north on Ice Harbor Dam Road. The phone number at the Visitor's Center is (509) 547-7781.

WHY: This year's drought has renewed interest in balancing the water needs of our region's hydroelectric system, salmon preservation and irrigation.

Note to editors: A tour of the Snake River and Ice Harbor Dam is part of the annual Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture conference, which Jesernig is hosting in Richland from Aug. 11 to 15. Directors and commissioners of agriculture from 13 western states, federal officials, and agricultural industry representatives will attend.

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